March 25, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

We in Academic Affairs wholeheartedly welcome and support the "UNM Faculty Senate Resolution: COVID-19 Emergency Measures for Student Academic Success," unanimously passed March 24, 2020 and sent to faculty March 25, 2020. The resolution received endorsement of President Garnett Stokes and Dr. James Holloway, Provost and EVP for Academic Affairs. It is attached again here. We are also attaching a list of some of the many things that people are doing around campus to support students.

The resolution provides critical guidance about how best to support students in Spring 2020 given the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Faculty Senate Resolution commits faculty to supporting students who choose to opt in to Credit/No Credit grading and to suspending graded assignments between March 23 and April 5, 2020, among other important commitments.

This e-mail outlines:

1) the process for implementing a student grade option change to CR/NC;
2) guidance for helping graduate students in their final semester;
3) information about Covid-19 and student employment at UNM;
4) what students are telling us about the challenges they face; and
5) information about Covid-19 and student financial aid.

UNM students will receive a message covering these same areas as well.

We are so privileged to be at a university with a faculty so deeply committed to the well-being of students. Thank you for the hard work that you are doing to support them.

Dr. James Paul Holloway, Provost and EVP for Academic Affairs
Dr. Barbara Rodriguez, Senior Vice Provost
Dr. Bill Stanley, Associate Provost for Faculty Success
Dr. Pamela Cheek, Associate Provost for Student Success

1) IMPLEMENTING A STUDENT GRADE OPTION CHANGE TO CR/NC DURING SPRING 2020:

THIS PROCESS WILL BE POSTED AT REGISTRAR.UNM.EDU

The Registrar’s Office understands that not all students and not all faculty may have the ability to download, print and sign paper forms.

For the remainder of the Spring 2020 term until May 21, 2020, in support of COVID-19 Emergency Measures for Student Academic Success,
Students opting-in to a CR/NC grade mode may send an email from their student @unm.edu email or @salud.unm.edu email account to their instructor’s @unm.edu or salud.unm.edu email account requesting the grade mode change to CR/NC.

- Subject line of the student’s email should read: **Request Grade Mode Change**
- The email must include the student’s UNM ID and the CRN and course code (showing department, course number, and section, e.g. POLS 496.003) of the course for which CR/NC grading is being requested.

Faculty should:

- Respond from their @unm.edu or @salud.unm.edu email account
- Address response to **INSTR_UPDATE-L@list.unm.edu**
- Cc: the student
- Confirm approval of the request in the body of the response

Records and Registration staff will process the requests and REPLY ALL to confirm that the requested action has been completed.

Use of @unm.edu or @salud.unm.edu email accounts is critical as it authenticates the identity of the student and the faculty member.

Faculty should recommend that students consult with program advisors and faculty to ensure they are making informed decisions about the use of CR/NC grades since there may be specific licensure requirements for letter grades to consider.

The Registrar’s Office team is working to implement changes to the Degree Audit system so that it does not flag Spring 2020 CR/NC grades as problems.

The Registrar will not charge students for the change to CR/NC grades, nor will the Registrar charge if a student dropped courses and wishes reinstatement.

2) GRADUATE STUDENTS IN FINAL SEMESTER

Graduate students in their final semester may face special problems such as not being able to complete data collection, lacking access to studio equipment and materials, or being unable to complete required experiments, exhibits, performances, or works. Faculty and departments are encouraged to be highly flexible in modifying requirements so that graduate students in their final semester can receive grades and complete their theses, projects, and degrees. Faculty can approve alternative approaches such as allowing digital showings or approving capstone projects based on preliminary data or work. Academic Affairs authorizes departments to offer students post-graduation opportunities to use UNM facilities to complete data collection, do public performances, or complete delayed studio work during the summer or fall without enrolling or paying additional tuition. For the very rare instances in which an “incomplete” is completely unavoidable, tuition will be waived for the required 1 credit hour of enrollment in the semester in which the student graduates.

Further guidance on these issues will be forthcoming from Graduate Studies.
3) INFORMATION ABOUT COVID-19 AND STUDENT EMPLOYMENT AT UNM

UNM is committed to continuing to pay students who were regularly employed by the university at the beginning of Spring 2020 at their regular employment rate until the end of the Spring 2020 semester. Unfortunately, students employed by third-party vendors on the UNM campus are not UNM employees and are not eligible for continued compensation by the university.

4) WHAT STUDENTS ARE TELLING US ABOUT THE CHALLENGES THEY FACE

Responses to our Student Needs Assessment Survey, posted at http://www.unm.edu/coronavirus/index.html (N>2100) indicate that many UNM students do not have reliable internet access, and cannot “attend” live Zoom sessions because of unexpected work, childcare, or family obligations. Many students are struggling economically and learning under very adverse conditions. Students are asking faculty to:

- Provide alternatives to live (synchronous) participation
- Make content available in non-video formats for those who cannot stream
- Email ASAP so that students know what to expect

Stephonáe Nelson, a graduate student in Public Administration writes that "Students are operating from a space of basic survival" and encourages us to consider:

- Combining multiple assignments into one condensed final project;
- Creating alternative final examination options, ex. shorter paper requirements, an impact report between class topic and the events in the real world, practical application projects, and/or tailoring projects to the current situation;
- Transitioning projects that require timely group coordination to individual projects, as not all students are supported on the same platforms or have similar resource access.

5) COVID-19 AND STUDENT FINANCIAL AID

The combined guidelines of the U.S. Department of Education, the NM Higher Education Department, and the Higher Learning Commission allow UNM to exercise flexibility, as follows:

- There are no issues with CR/NC grading.
- The university will be cognizant of the unique circumstances from this semester and reflect that in our decisions on academic progress petitions.
- Currently, UNM must adjust federal aid for students who completely withdraw prior to March 31, per federal regulation. Congressional action is needed to waive this. (Fortunately, this is only days away).
- Lottery scholarship recipient students, including recipients of the "Amigo" Scholarship are eligible for “exceptional mitigating circumstances" consideration. For fall 2020 scholarship evaluation purposes, UNM will utilize the cumulative GPA from fall 2019 if that is more favorable for the student than spring 2020.